



**The Aisling Society
of Sydney**

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1999

THE COUNCIL OF THE AISLING SOCIETY 1999

PRESIDENT
LIFE VICE-PRESIDENTS

VICE PRESIDENTS

HON. SECRETARY
HON. TREASURER
ARCHIVIST/LIBRARIAN
PUBLICITY OFFICER
COUNCILLORS

DR PETER KUCH
FR PATRICK O'ROURKE
MR VINCENT PIKE
MR JOHN RYAN
MS EVE ROSS
MRS MARY LEE
MR PETER GRAY
MISS MAUREEN McLOUGHLIN
MR PETER GRAY
DR MARIE LEECH
MR DAVID VAUGHAN
MRS AILSA HOBAN
MRS KATH STEWART
MR BRENDAN O'CONNELL
MR PHILIP LEE
MR TOM POWER
MR BRENDAN O'CONNELL

HON. AUDITOR

Marie Leech also continued her invaluable work in an unofficial capacity as Minutes Secretary, which is very much appreciated.

MEMBERSHIP

The Society has 71 financial members and 5 honorary life members. 3 University prize winners were honorary members in 1999. New members welcomed in 1999 were Sharon Horgan and Cathy Edwards.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 1999 Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday 24 February.

The Annual Report for 1998, which had been prepared by Peter Gray and circulated to members beforehand, was presented. Maureen McLoughlin tabled the Treasurer's report which disclosed that our financial situation continues to be healthy. The retiring President, Eve Ross, thanked Maureen for her continued hard work. Both these reports were ACCEPTED.

An Election of Office-Bearers was held, resulting as set out above. Warm tributes were paid to Eve Ross for her outstanding term of office as our President, and to Peter Kuch on his election as Eve's successor.

ORDINARY MEETINGS

- FEBRUARY** The February Ordinary Meeting followed on the Annual General Meeting and consisted of general business and correspondence, followed by two special items, firstly an hilarious talk by Mary Lee recounting some memorable moments from a career in international travel, and secondly the showing of a splendid video on Ireland.
- APRIL** **Dr Justin Lucas** of Boston University, presented a most interesting, thoroughly researched talk on Christopher Brennan, the celebrated poet. There were some marvellous contributions in question time, especially from Vincent Pike who well remembered encounters with Brennan in Sydney.
- MAY** **Anthony Finn**, a graduate of the National University of Ireland at Maynooth and a doctoral student at UNSW, gave a fascinating illustrated lecture about contemporary street art and other cultural/political sites in Ireland, entitled *"Sites of Conflict, Sites of Struggle: Living the nation through material culture"*.
- JUNE** **Clare Dunne** renewed her long and warm association with the Society with a memorable presentation, filled with beautiful music, on *"Mother Ireland, Mother Earth"*.
- AUGUST** We were delighted to welcome **Dr Simon Adams**, Lecturer in Irish History at UNSW, whose compelling talk was entitled *"In search of an Irish Mandela? The Northern Ireland peace process and South Africa's democratic transition in comparative context."*
- SEPTEMBER** **Dr Shirley Fitzgerald**, City Librarian and former Trustee of the Historic Houses Trust of NSW, gave us a fascinating glimpse into our socio-cultural past with her talk entitled *"19th Century Irish Marriages in Sydney"*.
- OCTOBER** Continuing the 19th century family theme, **Dr Trevor McLaughlin**, Professor of History at Macquarie University, beguiled us with a talk arrestingly entitled *"I expect I shall have to pay for it in this world or the next: some Irish born infanticides in late colonial Australia"*.
- NOVEMBER** Our Christmas Party featured not only the usual seasonal get together and supper, but also a fully fledged, carefully prepared and most interesting Talk by **Julie Tapper** entitled *"Educating Oscar: Wilde and Trinity"*.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

ST PATRICK'S DAY DINNER: Our St Patrick's Day celebration was another resounding success, held again at the Renaissance Hotel. 86 members and their guests attended. The President, Peter Kuch, welcomed the guests, who included Ms Sile de Valera, visiting Irish Minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism. The National Anthems of Ireland and Australia were sung to accompaniment by Miriam Devitt. Grace was said by Fr Brendan Shiel, and an excellent meal was enjoyed by all. Sir Gerard Brennan, recently retired Chief Justice of the High Court, was our speaker for the evening, and he gave us some charming reminiscences and vignettes of his engagement with Ireland over a long and distinguished life in the law. An appreciative vote of thanks was proposed by Prof. Oliver MacDonagh.

MID YEAR LUNCHEON: This year the venue for the luncheon was the Sydney Rowing Club at Abbotsford with its dramatic views of the Parramatta River. 64 members and their guests attended, and the guest of honour was Mr Patrick Bourne, First Secretary of the Irish Embassy in Canberra. He delivered the fifth annual Joan Ward Memorial Address, entitled "*The Work of an Angel: the life and times of the Book of Kells.*" The vote of thanks was proposed by Peter Kuch.

CHRISTMAS PARTY: This year's party was a very happy event, held at our now established venue, The Bowlers' Club of New South Wales, and attended by 70 members and friends. As already mentioned, this year's party had the added attraction of Julie Tapper's substantial Talk on Oscar Wilde. A splendid supper was served by the Club, and Maureen McLoughlin again produced a beautiful Christmas cake. Our President, Peter Kuch, ably chaired proceedings and made a short speech in which he expressed special thanks to Maureen McLoughlin for her organisation of the party.

AISLING SOCIETY MILESTONES IN 1999

- Dr Peter Kuch was elected the Society's 22nd President.
- Ms Jilli Streit has been engaged to bring to fruition the long awaited oral history project.
- In April/May, the Governor General, Sir William Deane, made an official visit to Ireland. At Sir William's request, the Society sent a formal greeting and message of support, to be passed on by him to the people of Ireland.
- Professor Portia Robinson was made a Member of the Order of Australia, and both Clare Dunne and Michael Maher, former Member of Parliament, were awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia.
- Sister Moira O'Sullivan's book, "*A Cause of Trouble? Irish Nuns and English Clerics*" was published by Crossing Press.
- Peter Kuch represented the Society at the Sydney University Faculty of Arts Prizegiving, when the Aisling Society Prize was presented to Bryce Ronald Cassin.
- Gerard Windsor's latest book, "*I asked Cathleen to Dance*", was launched on a memorable afternoon at Riverview, and published to critical acclaim.
- Patrick McLoughlin, much loved brother of our Treasurer Maureen, died in December after a long illness. We extend our deepest sympathy to Maureen and her family.

EVENTS DURING THE YEAR IN WHICH MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY PARTICIPATED

- In February, Gerry Adams visited Australia and delivered the Wallace-Worth Lecture at UNSW to a capacity audience including a number of our members, notably our President elect Peter Kuch.
- In May, Ronan Bennett, the Irish writer and author of "*The Catastrophist*" read some of his work under the auspices of the Celtic Studies Foundation, and several Aisling members were there to enjoy the evening.
- As part of the Chair in Modern Irish Studies Endowment Program, a Spring Workshop was conducted at UNSW in October, at which one of the principal speakers was our President, Peter Kuch, on the topic "*Irish Literature in Australia: Past and Present*".
- The second annual dinner of the UNSW Chair of Modern Irish Studies Endowment Committee was again organised by the President of that Committee, Mary Lee, and well supported by Aisling members.
- During the year a new society was established, namely the John Hubert Plunkett Society. It is a society principally of lawyers which has been formed to support the establishment of the Chair of Modern Irish Studies at UNSW. A highly successful inaugural dinner was held at Parliament House on 2 July at which the speaker was Murray Gleeson, Chief Justice of Australia. Again, many Aisling members supported the evening.
- On Saturday 28 August, the Australian Monument to the Great Irish Famine was unveiled by the Governor General, Sir William Deane at the Hyde Park Barracks in Sydney after a very moving ceremony at St Mary's Cathedral. Our member and Councillor, Tom Power, was the Chairman of the Committee responsible for this project. The co-ordination of the

project itself, and the grace and simplicity of the proceedings on the day, were achievements of which Tom can be justifiably proud.

- Bloomsday. The Society again supported the James Joyce Foundation, which is responsible for the Bloomsday celebrations, with a donation of \$200.
- The James Joyce Foundation arranged a poetry reading by visiting Irish poet, Paul Durcan, at the Ensemble Theatre in October.
- A number of members attended a mock trial convened by the James Joyce Foundation in November recalling the obscenity trial in New York in 1933 following the publication of *Ulysses*.
- Dr Aedeen Cremin stepped down as Director of the Celtic Studies Foundation at the University of Sydney after a long and distinguished term of office, for which the Society thanks her most sincerely.
- St Patrick's Day Parade: In 1999, Peter Gray and family, together with Maureen McLoughlin, Marie Leech and family, and Peter Kuch, drove and populated the 'Aisling Car' in the parade. The Society again donated \$100 to the Parade Committee, and also gave \$100 to each of the Irish Week Committee and the Irish Week Mass Committee, on both of which Mrs Kath Stewart was the Aisling Society representative.

AISLING SOCIETY PRIZES

In 1998, prizes of \$150 were offered to students from the University of New South Wales, the University of Sydney, the University of Wollongong, Macquarie University, the University of Western Sydney and the Australian Catholic University. Prize winners whose names have been announced at the time of writing are:

University of New South Wales

Ms Blanca de Plaisted and Ms Ngaire Kirwan

University of Sydney

Mr Bryce Ronald Cassin

CONCLUSION

I would again like to thank the members of the Aisling Society for the honour they have given me by allowing me to serve as Secretary. I wish to thank also Peter Kuch as President, Maureen McLoughlin, John Ryan, Eve Ross and Marie Leech in particular, and all the Council members generally for the help and support which I have received during the year. I record also the Society's sincere thanks to the Bowlers Club of NSW for giving us such splendid assistance and co-operation in holding our meetings in their rooms. I look forward to another enjoyable and successful year in 2000.



Peter Gray
HON SECRETARY

THE AISLING SOCIETY OF SYDNEY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1999

	1999 \$	1998 \$
<u>INCOME</u>		
Subscriptions Received	2,480.00	2,040.00
St. Patrick's night dinner	6,525.00	10,950.00
Mid Year Dinner	3,040.00	2,520.00
Christmas Party	1,750.00	1,900.00
Suppers	-	350.00
Interest Received	306.66	433.10
Sale of Aisling Cards	5.00	5.00
Raffle	546.75	695.00
	14,653.41	18,893.10
<u>LESS EXPENDITURE</u>		
Aisling Prize - University N.S.W.	300.00	300.00
Aisling Prize - Macquarie University	150.00	150.00
Aisling Prize - Sydney University	-	150.00
Bank Charges	17.38	46.43
Banner for Aisling Society	-	225.00
Cost - St. Patrick's night dinner	6,217.00	10,521.40
Travelling Costs-guest speaker	-	528.50
Cost of Mid Year Dinner	3,014.00	2,405.00
Cost of Christmas Party	1,609.00	1,580.00
Donations	700.00	500.00
Flowers	-	115.00
Gifts for Guest Speakers	321.35	445.85
Miscellaneous Expenses	66.34	209.85
Postage & Telephone	562.05	489.65
Printing & Stationery	436.82	562.25
Suppers	1,050.00	950.00
	14,443.94	19,178.93
<u>SURPLUS (DEFICIENCY) FOR THE YEAR</u>	209.47	(285.83)
Surplus - Beginning of Year	10,305.81	10,591.64
<u>SURPLUS AVAILABLE as at 31st</u> <u>December 1999</u>	\$10,515.28	\$10,305.81

THE AISLING SOCIETY OF SYDNEY

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1999

	1999 \$	1998 \$
<u>ACCUMULATED FUND:</u>		
Balance of Fund - End of Year	\$10,515.28	\$10,305.81
<u>REPRESENTED BY:</u>		
<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>		
Cash at Bank	1,142.78	863.31
Interest Bearing Deposits	9,000.00	9,000.00
	10,142.78	9,863.31
<u>FIXED ASSETS</u>		
Filing Cabinet - at cost	305.00	305.00
Library - at cost	137.50	137.50
	442.50	442.50
<u>TOTAL ASSETS</u>	10,585.28	10,305.81
<u>LESS LIABILITIES</u>		
Subscriptions in advance	70.00	-
<u>TOTAL LIABILITIES</u>	70.00	-
<u>NET ASSETS</u>	\$10,515.28	\$10,305.81

TREASURER'S STATEMENT

The accompanying Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet are true and correct.

Maureen McLoughlin
Maureen McLoughlin F.N.I.A.
Honorary Treasurer

AUDITOR'S REPORT:

The above balance sheet and the accompanying Income and Expenditure account for the year ended 31st December 1999 are in my opinion correct statements according to the books.

Brendan P. O'Connell F.C.A.
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

B P O'Connell